



State of Connecticut
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
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**Testimony of Rep. Mary Mushinsky (85th) in Support of HB 6360, An Act Concerning the
Implementation of Connecticut's Comprehensive Energy Strategy**

Before the Energy & Technology Committee

March 7, 2013

In many ways, this is a strong package of reforms which will move the state forward to a more affordable future by forcing rapid changes in energy use and efficiency. More help is needed for oil customers. And we must remain focused on the goal of steadily moving our state to rely more heavily on clean energy sources to reduce fossil fuel emissions, which have already begun to alter climate just as computer models predicted in 1989.

The bill must address energy in a way to include all fuels and all utilities. Efficiency financing must include heating oil customers, and efficiency and conservation programs must include municipal utility customers. The most critical problem in my district is the unaffordable cost of heating old houses with oil. Many of my constituents face annual heating oil bills of more than \$4,000. This is unsustainable, especially for those on flat incomes. All other household expenses, even food, are sacrificed for the oil bill. While CEFIA has recently responded to my repeated requests for assistance for these customers, it is clear we need a permanent funding stream to give all residents—even those on oil—full access to energy efficiency programs.

Section 3 advances a conservation adjustment mechanism for long-overdue, upfront financing for energy efficiency and clean energy through C-PACE and on-bill financing. CEFIA recently reported on their new initiatives to overcome the upfront financing obstacles. We need upfront financing of energy efficiency on a massive scale.

Section 8 promotes microgrids, helpful to reduce vulnerability. While our municipal utility has had an enviable record in preventing outages, we know that all utilities will face increasing threats from climate change, which generates more frequent and intense storms. Adapting to these changes is essential because “weather on steroids” is the new reality.

Section 10-16 contains disclosure provisions which we have needed for some time to protect renters and homebuyers. The very fact of disclosure will drive energy efficiency improvements, as buyers will seek to avoid energy-wasting structures. In Wallingford, we have pushed disclosure of benchmark data for energy consumption in schools and municipal buildings through the efforts of the Wallingford Energy Conservation Commission and local officials. Buildings are then ranked in priority order for efficiency improvements that save taxpayers money as well as reduce emissions.

Section 17 includes an important change to building codes to advance electric vehicle charging stations. This is an important step in promoting the transition to clean, electric commuting transportation.

Section 19 encourages natural gas expansion. While natural gas is a fossil fuel with some of the same climate change problems of oil and coal, it will allow immediate financial relief for many of my constituents in oil-heated homes as we transition to a clean energy future. In our municipal utility territory, solar has been almost non-existent due to the absence of subsidy, and wind is not viable as we are too far inland for reliable generation. Please ensure that natural gas is a “bridge” fuel by setting time limits on investment in gas infrastructure.

Job Creation

The bill has the additional benefit of creating thousands of new jobs in energy efficiency technology and construction. Green energy was singled out as a job growth area for Connecticut by the Program Review and Investigations Committee in their Dec. 2009 report on Workforce and Higher Education. Trades can include everything from carpentry, insulation, heating and cooling, solar hot water and geothermal installation to construction and engineering jobs in alternative fuels.